


NOAA Ecosystem Delineation Workshop

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Recommendations of the US Commission on Ocean Policy Regarding Ecosystem-Based Management and Eco-Regions

USCOP's Foundation Blocks for Ocean Policy

- Ecosystem-based management
- Incorporation of scientific information in decision-making
- Improved governance
- Broad public education

USCOP and Ecosystem-Based Management

- US ocean and coastal resources should be managed to reflect the relationships among all ecosystem components, including human and nonhuman species and the environments in which they live.

USCOP and Ecosystem-Based Management, Cont'd

- Applying this principle will require defining relevant geographic management areas based on ecosystem, rather than political, boundaries.

Ecosystem-Based Management

- Looks at all the links among living and nonliving resources, rather than considering single issues in isolation.
- Considers human activities, their benefits, and their potential impacts within the context of the broader biological and physical environment.

Ecosystem-Based Management

- Focuses on the multiple activities occurring within specific areas that are defined by ecosystem, rather than political, boundaries.

USCOP Finding: Defining Eco-Regional Management Boundaries

- Because of the connection between land-based activities and ocean conditions, an appropriate geographic boundary for ecosystem-based management of ocean areas would combine large marine ecosystems with the watersheds that drain into them.

USCOP Recommendation 5-1.

The National Ocean Council should work with the Congress, the President's Council of Advisors on Ocean Policy, and state, territorial, tribal, and local leaders, including representatives from the private sector, nongovernmental organizations and academia, to develop a flexible and voluntary process for the creation of regional ocean councils. States, working with relevant stakeholders, should use this process to establish regional ocean councils with support from the National Ocean Council.

USCOP Findings: Regional Ocean Councils

- The boundaries of regional ocean councils should encompass relatively large areas with similar ecosystem features.
- At a minimum, councils should encompass the area from the inland extent of coastal watersheds to the offshore boundary of the nation's exclusive economic zone.
- They should address a broad range of ocean and coastal issues.

USCOP Findings: Regional Ocean Councils, Cont'd

- Membership should be broad and representative of all levels of government, with participation by non-governmental stakeholders
- Federal agencies can support regional progress by immediately improving their coordination at the regional level.

USCOP Recommendation 5-2.

The President, through an executive order, should direct all federal agencies with ocean- and coastal-related functions to immediately improve their regional coordination and increase their outreach efforts to regional stakeholders.

USCOP Rec. 5-2 cont'd

As part of this process, NOAA, EPA, USACE, DOI, and USDA should:

- Collaborate with regional, state, territorial, tribal and local governments, and nongovernmental parties to identify regional priorities and information needs.
- Identify inconsistencies in agency mandates, policies, regulations, practices, or funding that prevent regional issues from being effectively addressed and communicate those to the National Ocean Council.

USCOP Rec. 5-2 cont'd

- Improve coordination and communication among agencies, including the possible development of interagency protocols to guide regional decision-making.
- Coordinate funding and grants in a manner consistent with regional priorities.

USCOP Recommendation 5-3.

The President should form a task force of federal resource management agencies to develop a proposal for adoption and implementation of common federal regional boundaries. The task force should solicit input from state, territorial, tribal, and local representatives.

Workshop Purpose

- Based upon the NOAA Strategic Plan and findings of the USCOP, begin developing one or more eco-regional frameworks for NOAA to consider as a foundation for improving its abilities to implement an ecosystem-based approach to marine resource management.

Workshop Purpose

- Specifically, we want to look at options for linking coastal watersheds and large marine ecosystems across the United States into a system of ecosystem-based "eco-regions."